

AGASSIZ PARK
Fourth Street
Calumet
Houghton County
Michigan

HABS MI-413
MI413

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

AGASSIZ PARK

HABS No. MI-413

- Location: On the east side of the village of Calumet, Houghton County, Michigan, bounded on the west by Fourth Street and on the north by Elm Street.
- Present Owner: UOP, Inc., Des Plaines, IL (UOP Realty is located at 101 Red Jacket Road, Calumet, MI, and is the local contact).
- Present Use: Village Park.
- Statement Of Significance: Designed by Warren H. Manning in the early 1920s, this is an extremely effective combination of a well defined controlling element (a radiating star) with a relaxed village park atmosphere. The relaxed atmosphere was created by a judicious arrangement of open spaces for active pursuits and smaller, denser spaces for more sedate activities. The plantings were a collection of largely native flora, frequently wildflowers. The park, while it was well maintained up to about 1950, was the center of village activities. Sports events, band concerts, flower watching, and strolling were all eagerly pursued. No other open space of this calibre exists in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.
- Historian: Kevin Harrington, August 1975.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of Erection: 1921 and after. Dedication, 26 September 1923. (Turner, pp. 78-79).
2. Architect: Warren H. Manning, of Boston, Massachusetts. (Turner, p. 79).
3. Original and subsequent owners: The bulk of the original park remains in the hands of UOP, Inc., the successor firm of the Calumet and Hecla Consolidated Mining Company. The athletic field section has been sold to the local school district. Two parcels at the south end have been sold for senior citizen's housing, and an insurance office building. A one-acre plot at the northwest corner has been sold to a supermarket firm.

CHAIN OF TITLE FOR AGASSIZ PARK, CALUMET VILLAGE, HOUGHTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN located in the E ½ of the SE ¼ of Section 14, Range 33 W Twp 56N.

a. E ½ of SE ¼ & W ½ of SW ¼ PATENT

State of Michigan to St. Mary's Falls Ship Canal Co.
May 25, 1855, rec. June .6, 1866.
Vol. 17, p.2.

b. E $\frac{1}{2}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ & W $\frac{1}{2}$ of SW $\frac{1}{4}$ WARRANTY DEED
St. Mary's Falls Ship Canal Co. to St. Mary's Canal Mineral Land Co.
June 8, 1860, rec. June 23, 1862.
Vol. 5, p. 316.

c. E $\frac{1}{2}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ WARRANTY DEED
St. Marys Canal Mineral Land Co. to Calumet Mining Co.
Dec. 12, 1865, rec. June 16, 1866.
Vol. 8, p.311.

d. Merger of Calumet with Hecla Mining Co. to form the Calumet and Hecla Mining Co.
March 1871.
Red Metal, p. 72.

e. Formation of the Calumet & Hecla Consolidated Copper Co.
Sept. 10, 1923.
Red Metal, p. 140.

f. Formation of Calumet & Hecla, Inc.
November 8, 1952.
Vol. MR-25, p. 312.

g. Merger of Calumet & Hecla with Universal Oil Products.
April 25, 1968.

4. Builders, contractors, suppliers: Manning's fee was paid by the mine company. The company also placed the services of its surface construction crew at Manning's disposal for major work. Most of the work, however, was accomplished by local school children who collected local plant specimens at Manning's request and planted them in the garden beds at his direction.

5. Original plans and construction: The basic shape of the park is an irregular right triangle with its base at the north west corner of the plot. The organizing element of the park is an offset, irregular eight sided star with a statue of Alexander Agassiz at its center. The center of the star is located due east of the intersection of Portland and Fourth Streets, about 450 feet. Paths extend from the star's center to each of the side streets entering Fourth Street (i.e., Scott, Portland, Oak and Elm) . To the east and south of the center a series of tree-lined pathways of lombardy poplar radiate towards the east line of the park and serve to define the flower beds. Running along the east line of the park is a long double row od Lombardy Poplar, with more flower beds immediately to their east. By offsetting the center of the star, Manning achieved a variety of sizes for the wedges between the various pathways. At the east end the wedges are intimate, small, tree-covered elegant flower beds. On the town side, or west, large open areas between the paths created easily distinguishable areas where picnickers and ball players, for instance, would be separated by pathways. The trees planted along the pathways from the town side to the center were dedicated to the local men who had served in the First World War.

A photograph taken in 1948 indicates much of the park's early appearance. The current Fourth Street in the village had not been put in. The west side of the park was lined by a double row of Lombardy poplars, as well as the east and north lines. Thus, rather than the wide street which one must now cross to reach the park, a tree-shaded park literally began at the end of each

side street. At the point where Oak Street enters the park, where the semicircle of trees is still located, there was a public skating pond. To its north side was a tennis court. (Photo by W.J. Kraft, in Coppertown collection).

6. Notes on known alterations and additions, with dates and architects: As with any piece of landscape design, the park changed in character as it grew, withered, and was replanted. However, no major redesign of the park was ever attempted. In the past few years, as parcels have been sold by the mining company, or its successor, and as the park has been allowed to deteriorate, the park has lost much of its glory. Yet, the basic plan remains. Of note, though, is that the statue was removed in 1974.

B. Historic events and persons associated with the park:

As with any village park, even one as sophisticated in design as this, the events and persons associated with it are the life of the community which uses it. The park was used, loved, and appreciated.

The park was named for Alexander Agassiz, who lived between 1835 and 1910, and who was the president of the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company between 1871 and 1910. At the center of the star was a statue rendered in bronze of Agassiz; it was designed by Paul Wayland Bartlett, cast by the J. Arthur Limerick Company, Founders, of Baltimore, Maryland. In 1974, this statue was moved to a new site just to the east of the Coppertown USA Development Corporation, Inc., offices located at 101 Red Jacket Road, Calumet, Michigan. This is the former Calumet & Hecla Public Library building, currently being restored by Coppertown.

Calumet Copper and People (Turner, 1974)

“Beginning in 1921 the historic Common was turned into a place of beauty to which young and old flocked for many years. This park, too, was designed by a New Englander, the eminent landscape designer and city planner, Warren H. Manning, as a memorial to tats Alexander Agassiz. The men, women, and children of Calumet helped create Agassiz Park. Some of its trees were dedicated as memorials to men who served and died in the First World War. Manning, described in 1921 as ‘one of the most experienced and thoughtful men in the United States in the line of city planning and general development,’ proposed that Calumet people join in a Community Day through school and community organizations. He encouraged transplanting of wildflowers of the district to beautify the park. In 1922, 7,500 school children gathered to plant flowers from the surrounding forests. Company gardeners cultivated flower beds, mowed lawns, and kept the park beautiful for years. Manning collected, and today there are preserved in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, some drawings and posters school children of Calumet and Osceola made in the local beautification projects. Some children depicted scenes at their homes; others did landscapes, sometimes adding verses.

Agassiz Park was officially dedicated September 26, 1923. At that time Calumet's most distinguished piece of sculpture was unveiled—a statue of Alexander Agassiz in academic robes, books tucked under his chair, one-sixth larger than life, and cast in bronze. The statue is the work of one of America's foremost sculptors, Paul Wayland Bartlett, former student of Auguste Rodin. Bartlett studied in France and worked there much of his life. One of his most outstanding contributions is his *Moses* at the Library of Congress, but the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Louvre in Paris, and the Royal Law Courts in London are among the places which possess his work. Bartlett designed the equestrian figure of Lafayette which American school children in 1908 gave to the French people and

which was erected in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris. The French government made Bartlett a Commander of the French Legion of Honor in 1924. Calumet's statue of Agassiz by Bartlett was a gift of the Agassiz family." (Excerpt from Thurner, pp. 78-79)

The designer of the park, Warren H. Manning, became very interested in the Upper Peninsula generally and wrote a series of articles which were published in a local paper, probably the Daily Mining Gazette. Unfortunately the person who clipped these articles did not note either date or source for these articles. They are entitled, "The coming of man in the Michigan upper peninsula," "Upper peninsula interests of climate, sails and life," and "Lay of land is important to U. P., W. H. Manning says." An article in the Calumet News on the 22nd of September 1923 discussed the new park and its design in the following terms.

The family of the deceased man, wishing to perpetuate the memory of their illustrious father ... erected the monument ... in the center of the beautiful park as the hub of the recreation grounds.

...work was started on the construction of an elaborate park to replace the barren field lying between ...the village and the mine ... this field ... has become a masterpiece of landscape designing ... of Warren H. Manning ... of North Billerica, Mass., who completed his work on the park this past spring. In the center of the network of shaded walks and greasy slopes is the statue.

A year ago 7500 school children of the district gathered in the park with arms laden with flowers and planted them about the park as a community tribute... Tall maples, birches and oaks shade the pathways ... which is surrounded by a wide border of shrubbery, flowers and evergreens. There were sports fields at the north end and tennis courts along the west side, along with playground equipment. When completed the park will excel any recreational spot in the peninsula.

Even before the formal presentation of the park it was being used to enhance the life of the community, the Daily Mining Gazette reported on the 24th May 1924 that the second annual community day was to be held in Agassiz Park in June. Under the direction of the park's designer, Warren H. Manning the children of the community were each to be given a plant from the park's collection to grow themselves at their homes.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Name: Agassiz Park, Calumet Township, located along Fourth Street in Calumet, and extending eastward to the area of former mining activity, in Houghton County, Michigan (fig. 1).

B. General statement:

1. Architectural merit and interest: Agassiz Park was the only developed, large open space in the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company vicinity. Its design and placement created a transition zone between the village of Calumet and the mining activities of the company. Its plantings combined examples of wildflowers of the region and cultivated flowers able to withstand the difficult climate.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair. The outlines of the design and somehow the beds are still visible but the site is being neglected, and sections of it have been sold and converted to other uses.

C. Exterior description:

1. Dimensions: About twenty five acres, in a rough triangle measuring 1200' x 1500' x 1950' Currently, this space is somewhat less, since about seven acres have been sold.
2. Layout; shape: A rough triangle.
3. Plan: The outline of the park is a right triangle with its base at its northwest corner at the intersection of Fourth and Elm Streets. The hypotenuse, running from northeast to southwest, is not a straight line, but bends somewhat along its course. Offset somewhat to the southeast from the center point of this triangle is the center of a star which serves to organize the entire park. Four gravel paths, with concrete curbs, extend from the center, in which there was a memorial statue to Alexander Agassiz, to intersect with the cross streets of the village where they intersect with Fourth Street, the west line of the park. These paths are lined on either side with trees, predominantly maples. The other arms of the star are lined with lombardy poplars, and in the narrow triangles formed by the paths and the hypotenuse the flower beds are placed. A double row of Lombardy poplars runs along the hypotenuse, and there are also extensive beds just to its east. The present beds contain, among other species, lupines, peonies, iris, roses, rhododendrons and lilacs. At the north end of the park are the high school athletic fields. There is a semi-circle of trees where Oak enters Fourth Street. Finally, Oak, cedar, and firs are also planted in the park.

D. General setting:

The park lies on land legally owned by UOP, Inc., the successor firm of Calumet and Helca, the owner of the site when the park was developed. The park land separates the village of Calumet (formerly Red Jacket) from the former main site of mining activities of the company. UOP ceased to mine the land about a year after it merged with C & H (1968). On the west is Fourth Street in the village, on the north Elm Street, and a company railroad spur used to run just east of the hypotenuse.

1. Historic landscape design: See above.
2. Outbuildings: There are stands, concession facilities, and restrooms at the periphery of the athletic fields at the north end of the park.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Aerial photographs taken in 1948 by Wendell J. Kraft, Calumet, MI, prints of which are in the Coppertown USA, Calumet, MI, files.

B. Secondary and Published Sources:

“Agassiz Park of Calumet, Michigan, Built by Community Effort,” Parks & Recreation, Vol. 11, no. 2 (1927-28): 85-91.

“Agassiz Memorial Presented to City; Ceremony Impressive,” The Calumet News, 27 September 1923, p. 6.

“Many Witness Unveiling of Agassiz Statue and Formal Presentation of Park Here,” Daily Mining Gazette, 27 September 1923, p. 7.

“School Children to be Amateur Gardeners Here,” Daily Mining Gazette, 24 May 1923, p. 6.

Turner, Arthur W. Calumet Copper and People. Hanaack, MI: The Book Concern, 1974.

“Turning Waste Space into a Memorial Park,” The American City, March 1922, p. 271.

“Unveil Statue of Agassiz at Memorial Park Sept 26,” The Calumet News, 22 September 1923.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

1. Warren H. Manning's papers.
2. Local newspapers for articles and comment on the design and use of the park.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation was done in the summer of 1975 by Kevin Harrington and Wendy Nicholas for the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service.

1 Sketch of Agassiz Park by author.

